Information Architecture: What is it?
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Is it real?
• 3468 hits for ‘information architect’ on Monster.com on June 4, 2007
• The ASIST IA Summit March 2007 had almost 600 attendees (http://www.iasummit.org/2007/)
• The IA Listserv at ASIST
• SILS summer course

Who does it?
• Technical writers
• Graphics artists
• Architects
• Film makers
• Information specialists
  – librarians
  – publishers
  – web designers
  – database administrators

Why?
• Inform
  – scholarship
  – common good
  – instruction
• Persuade
  – advertise/promote/sell
  – control
• Entertain
  – passive
  – active
• Create

Factors

Context
• Cultural setting
  – social acceptance
  – timing
• Costs
Goals

- Transfer/Lookups
- Education
- Social Good
- Business
- Political/Legal

Messages

- Content (discipline, organization)
- Scope
- Complexity
- Novelty

Audience

- Range (who, where, why)
- Knowledge base
- Experience base
- Receptivity (physical, mental, emotional)

Media

- Technical requirements
- Format
- Number of channels
- Transfer rate
- Degree of interaction

Information Architecture Model ver. 0.01 (IA Summit 2000) (synthesis of ~900 terms)

Discussion Questions

How is the electronic medium different from:
books/newspapers?
film/TV?
paintings/sculpture?

What are the implications
for users?
for designers?
for intermediaries?
Design Process
- Mission definition
  - Problems/needs, materials, skills, vision
- Feasibility
  - Needs assessment, cost-benefit analysis
- Prototyping and evaluation
- Implementation
- Evaluation and maintenance

Information Packages

Aggregation of Packages

Smaller packages, more linkages
- Designing messages for electronic consumption suggests small chunks
  - Screen real estate limitations
  - Scroll, paging limits
- Hyperlinks give flexibility but also add cognitive load (lost in cyberspace)
- Implications of search engine entry points
- Everything is becoming more like a reference work and less like a novel??

Packages
- Objects
  - physical attributes (e.g., size, color, shape, preiconographic)
  - conceptual attributes
    - denotation (e.g., iconographic)
    - connotation (e.g., iconological)
  - behavior (e.g., display, compute, compare)

Packages (cont’)
- Relationships
  - Intrapackage relationships
    - physical (next page, see Figure X, position, order)
    - conceptual (anaphora)
  - Interpackage relationships
    - physical (citations)
    - conceptual (allusion, metaphor)
Packages (cont’)

• Mechanisms
  – control
    • display (scroll, jump, zoom, hover)
    • usage monitor (histories, bookmarks)
  – query
    • analytical (with/without relevance feedback)
    • selection
    • dynamic
  – manipulation
    • cut and paste
    • add value (e.g., concordance, link plot)

Events

• Exchange cycle
  – e.g., a smile acknowledged, an http requested page returned
• Share cycle
  – perception, processing, comprehension of an information package by more than one [person/package/object]

WWW Design

• Know the audience
  – Universal access
• Iterative design and testing
  – Consider the development curve
• Organize, organize, organize
• Be consistent
• Appropriate use of media
  – Avoid gratuitous bells and whistles
• Leverage interactivity
  – Maintain interest
  – Gather feedback

Organizational Structures

• List
• Array
• Hierarchy
• Network
• Hybrids

Organizational Schemes

• Alphabetical
• Chronological
• Geographic
• Topical
• Numerical
• Administrative Parts/Units
• Importance, size
• Task
• User group
• Metaphor
• Random (feeling lucky)

Control Mechanisms (Navigation)

• Context (where am I?)
  – Consistency (layout, labeling, etc.)
• Links (types, labels)
• Input forms
• Menus
• Toolbars
• TOCs, sitemaps, tours
• Mouse events, zooms
Expression

- Words
  - Appropriate and controlled vocabulary
  - Clear, concise statements and prompts
- Images
  - Appropriate
  - Browser friendly
- Video, sound
  - Appropriate controls
- Interactivity and Flow

Planning

- Storyboards
- Scenarios
- Templates
- Feedback from users
- Maintenance
- Project Management

Implementation

- Tools
  - Wireframes
  - Software (e.g., Visio, Flowcharter)
- Evaluation
- Maintenance
  - Content management
  - Digital libraries